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The Equity of God's Dealings with Nations.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

IN SALEM, JULY 23, 1812,

A DAY OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION AND PRAYER

IN

MASSACHUSETTS,

OCCASIONED BY THE

**DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST GREAT-
BRITAIN.**

.....

By BROWN EMERSON,

COLLEAGUE PASTOR OF THE THIRD CHURCH IN SALEM.

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SERMON.

JEREMIAH XVIII. 7, 8, 9, 10.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build up and to plant it ; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.

GOD is a mighty sovereign, doing his pleasure in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. He changeth the times and the seasons ; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings, and none can deliver out of his hand. Nations and individuals are equally dependent on him for every benefit. But both nations and individuals are apt to lose sight of their dependence, and trust in their own wisdom and strength.

The governors of nations too generally conduct their affairs as if they believed there were no being above them, from whom they derive their authority, and to whom they are accountable for the use they make of it. It seems to be thought, that justice, mercy, and the fear of the Lord, are incumbent only on individuals, and that nations may disregard the law of Heaven, and commit the most enormous crimes, with impunity. But they are in the hand of God as clay in the hand of the potter. Under this significant metaphor are nations represented in the context. Jeremiah, by divine command, went down to the potter's house, *and behold he wrought a work on the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter : so he made another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to the prophet, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter ? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.*

The language and sentiments of the text and context are equally adapted to any nation or kingdom under heaven. Notwithstanding the pride of haughty kings, and the boasted strength and magnificence of mighty empires, they are completely subject to the will of God. He can raise a powerful empire from the most contemptible beginnings ; or suddenly reduce it to utter ruin. " As the smallest motion of the finger suffices to effect any change upon the potter's clay ; so the secret volition of the Almighty operates with irresistible energy through the whole creation."

The sovereignty of God over nations, and the awful quickness with which he can reduce and de-

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stroy them, are most affectingly exemplified in many instances on sacred record. The drowning of the world, the burning of four kingdoms in one morning on the plains of Sodom, the overwhelming of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and the destroying of the vast army of Sennacherib before the walls of Jerusalem, by an invisible sword, show how completely all nations are in the hand of God, how easily he can dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel, and how dangerous it is for them to refuse his warnings and resist his will.

But in my text he proclaims his mercy toward penitent nations, as well as his justice toward those that are wicked, and his sovereignty over all. When they humbly return to God, from whom they have revolted, he will turn from his wrath, and avert the judgments with which he had threatened to scourge or destroy them. But if they wax more corrupt, and multiply their provocations against him, he will withhold the benefits which he would otherwise have given, and display his truth and justice in making them monuments of his vengeance.

Such, in its connection, is the import of the passage which is to guide our meditations on this solemn occasion.

It will be attempted to show—

I. How God speaks to nations.

II. When nations refuse to obey his voice; and when they turn from their evil. And,

III. That God deals with nations according to their conduct toward him.

I. We will consider how God speaks to nations.

The various media, through which he displays himself, and conveys the knowledge of his will to men, are, in scripture, called his *voice*. They convey ideas to our minds, as certainly as words, which we hear with our ears. Hence, not only the written word of God is called his voice, but the various works of his hand and events of his providence. The Psalmist accordingly says, *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters ; the voice of the Lord is powerful, and divideth the flames of fire ; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness.* By the prophet Isaiah the judgments of God are expressly called his voice. *The voice of the Lord rendereth recompence to his enemies.* Predicting the destruction of Sennacherib's army, the same prophet, in his eloquent style, says, *The Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down.*

God speaks to nations by his word and providence. He speaks to them by his *word*.

In ancient times, before any part of the sacred volume was written, and while the canon of scripture was incomplete, he warned and instructed nations by prophets, whom he commissioned, inspired, and sent forth in his own name, as special messengers, to declare his will. But the period of immediate inspiration has long since closed. No new revelation, or special commission from God, is now to be expected. And since the sacred canon is complete, no such communications are necessary. The dispensation under which we live is distinguished with greater privileges. God now speaks to nations, as well as individuals, not by oral messages,

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but by his written word. The Bible is the voice of Jehovah, which neither a nation nor a person can reject or disobey, but at infinite hazard.

The moral law, as revealed in the Old Testament, and more amply expounded and enforced in the New, is the standing law of Jehovah's empire; a law, which no man, or body of men, can violate, without incurring its tremendous penalty; a penalty which none can escape, without the protection of that blood which saved the inhabitants of Goshen from the sword of the destroying angel. In the Bible the path is plainly drawn for kings and magistrates of every grade and description; so that he who reads may run. Their duties are defined by many general and particular precepts, and enforced by the most illustrious and excellent examples. Magistrates and nations are bound to make the Bible their standard of principle and action; and every principle they embrace, and every act they do, which is repugnant to this inspired rule, provokes the Almighty, and exposes them to his wrath. This proposition is fully verified by his treatment of kings and nations, as well as by his word. It is a truth, indeed, which no one can doubt, who has just conceptions of the character, law and government of God, and of the relations that subsist between him and his creatures.

It is to be further remarked, in this connection, that God speaks to nations by the faithful *ministration* of his word. The gospel ministry is divinely instituted; and gospel ministers are as truly the messengers of the Lord to the people, as the ancient prophets and apostles. The Bible is the oracle they are to consult; and when they speak according to

this word, the people are bound to regard their instructions and warnings, as clothed with divine authority. They speak in the name of Jehovah; and when they faithfully deliver the messages of his word, they may enforce them on rulers and people by *Thus saith the Lord*, with as much propriety as Jeremiah did, who *spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost*. And when the rulers and people of a nation refuse and condemn the warnings and instructions of the ministers of Christ, they rebel against the Lord, and will as inevitably fall under his righteous judgments, as those ancient nations did, which rejected the warnings of his prophets.

Again. God speaks to nations by his *providence*.

When he gives them political and religious prosperity, and saves them from his judgments, the fact proves them to be objects of his favor. The fear of the Lord and obedience to his commands do evidently exist, in a good degree, among such a people. But when he sends them tokens of his displeasure; when he suffers the body politic to be rent limb from limb by the hatred and animosity of a factious party spirit; when he permits them to plunge into war, and commissions the sword to devour; or visits them with famine, pestilence, earthquake, or fire; these judgments are strong indications of his anger, and prove that the people have abused their prosperity, and awakened his wrath by their crimes. These conclusions are drawn from the character of God; from his justice, truth, goodness and mercy. For while his goodness and mercy forbid that he should scourge and afflict a penitent and virtuous people, his justice and truth require him to execute his threatenings on incorrigible transgressors.

He not only speaks to nations by his providence toward *them* in particular, but by his dealings with other nations. All the judgments that have overtaken the kingdoms, states and empires of the earth, in ages past, so far as they are made known in sacred and profane history, are so many solemn warnings to nations of the present day. In such events the Most High utters his voice and makes bare his arm to the rulers of this nation, and to the people, who err from his ways.

Since God thus speaks to nations by his word and providence, how deeply interested are magistrates and subjects, to regard his voice, and not reject his counsel!

II. It is to be shown when nations refuse to obey the voice of the Lord; and when they turn from their evil. As national sins depend, in some measure, for their nature and magnitude, upon the form of government, our remarks, under this head, will be confined to the republican form, which is prescribed by the federal constitution of the United States. In despotic governments such as prevail in every part of Europe, and, indeed, in every part of the world, with the exception only of Great-Britain and this nation, the people are mere slaves to the tyrant, who wields an iron sceptre over their heads. Every act, in such governments, is considered as the act of the monarch.

Here I cannot but ask you to pause a single moment, to reflect on this affecting truth; that in no nation on the face of the earth is there even the shadow of civil liberty, but in the two nations above named! Every other nation is ruled by some imperious despot, who holds their destinies in

his own hand. Whom he will he makes poor, and whom he will he makes rich ; whom he will he kills, and whom he will he keeps alive. What a curse from God is a cruel despotism ! And yet, melancholy the fact ! we are plunged into a war with the only nation, except our own, where the last spark of freedom is not extinguished ! Yes ; and at the critical juncture, too, when that nation is struggling for existence against the horrid grasp of the atheistical despot of continental Europe ! Contemplated in this attitude, the case presents an alarming and distressing prospect. Religion and freedom are involved in this controversy. I tremble for my country !

But I am not now to discuss the merits of the cause ; but am to show when a republic refuses to obey the voice of the Lord, and when it turns from its evil.

In general terms, it may be said, that a commonwealth, or republican nation, refuses to obey the voice of God, when, in its public acts, or in the exercise of its constitutional powers, it violates the law of God, and the maxims and directions of his word. In such a government, every act is properly considered as the act of the people ; for the rulers are men of their own choice.

The nation disobeys the voice of the Lord in the following cases. First, when the people, in electing men to the offices of government, pay no regard to the cause of religion. Secondly, when rulers are upheld by the people in the abuse of their authority. And thirdly, when the principles and manners of the people are greatly corrupted.

In every thing they do, people are bound to have a sacred regard to the honor of God, and the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. In a republic, the political sovereignty is in the people; and, unless they be deceived in the men they choose to rule over them, they are responsible to God for every unrighteous act which the administration may do. The precepts, *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and, *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, are as binding on the people in the exercise of their elective franchise, as in any other acts of their lives. They ought to have a steady eye upon the general cause of truth and godliness. Not that I would advocate a *religious test*; that men should be of a particular denomination or sect in religion, in order to be eligible to a civil office. By no means. Neither civil nor religious freedom, nor the honor of God, nor the welfare of a nation, requires it. But all these do plainly require, that rulers should be good men, believers of the truth, fearers of God, haters of covetousness and all sin. They are said expressly in the Bible to be God's ministers, ordained by his appointment, and invested by him with all their power. He has ordained them for a terror to evil doers and a praise to them that do well. No valid reason, it is presumed, can be assigned, why it is not as necessary, that the ministers of God, ordained for these purposes, should be good men, as that the ministers of Christ should be such; what some boldly assert to the contrary notwithstanding. No circumstance appears in the comparison, to render it less important, that civil magistrates, especially those who are high in office, should be religious men, than that officers of the

christian church should be such ; for the influence of the former is as great, and often much greater, than that of the latter. The good or evil, which one man of high rank and authority may do in a nation, in regard both to the temporal and eternal interest of men, is beyond our calculation. If you look for examples of this influence, contrast the history of David and Nehemiah on one hand, with that of Jeroboam and Ahab on the other. It is a licentious and pernicious doctrine, that religion and civil government are so completely separate in their nature and design, that, in electing rulers, there is no necessity for regarding their religious character. True religion is the only thing which secures the favor of God ; and therefore it is the only permanent basis of civil government. For want of this, the governments of the world have been perpetually fluctuating, and thrones and kingdoms have been destroyed in swift succession. When people, therefore, in electing their rulers, have no just regard to the cause of religion, they surely do evil in the sight of the Lord, and refuse to obey his voice.

Again. This guilt is upon them, when they uphold the rulers in the abuse of their authority.

Rulers abuse their power, when they enact unjust and oppressive laws, and cause them to be executed in a cruel and arbitrary manner ; when they squander the public treasures on objects that are useless, or of little worth, to the community ; when they plunge the nation into bloody and desolating wars, without the most imperious necessity on the ground of self-defence, and without the trial of every other reasonable measure ; when they employ their authority in encouraging and promoting evil doers, and in

endeavors to disgrace and injure them that do well ; and when they bestow what is in their gift, to advance and establish the interest of a party, rather than the public good. In such ways the rulers of the people may abuse their power ; and when the people uphold and encourage them in such acts of injustice, fraud and oppression, they do evil in the sight of the Lord, and refuse to obey his voice.

Moreover. This is the melancholy case, when the principles and manners of the people are greatly corrupted. The evils above described will never, indeed, exist, without an extensive and deplorable spread of licentiousness in principle and practice. Sins are so connected, that one leads to another. Smaller crimes lead to greater ; till, at length, the greatest enormities are multiplied without alarm or contrition. When iniquity abounds and triumphs, as at the present day, the voice of the Lord is disregarded, and his judgments will not linger.

If, in these ways, a people refuse to obey the voice of the Lord, a turning from their evil is directly the reverse. They reverence the precepts of God's word as the rules that bind them in all imaginable cases ; and they respect the appointed ministration of it, as a voice which declares his will. In their choice of rulers, they will have an undeviating regard to the cause of religion, and the public good. When the rulers abuse their power, they will withdraw their support and confidence, and place others in their stead, who will be more faithful to their country and their God. And the people will break off their own sins by righteousness, and penitently return unto the Lord. Indeed, repentance and reformation in the body of the people, are the

only pledge we can have of permanent peace and prosperity.

If the parts which compose the body are affected with an inveterate disease, the whole body is diseased, and, without a seasonable and sovereign remedy, will soon become a lifeless, noisome mass, which must be removed from the face of the earth. The axe must be laid at the root of the tree, in order to effect a radical removal of the evil. The people must turn from their evil ways, or there is no solid ground of hope. I proceed—

III. To show that God deals with nations according to their conduct toward him.

In the government of the world he is pleased to prescribe rules for himself. Should *we* adopt this rule, and render evil for evil, we should usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Revenge is a daring invasion of his dominion; a presumptuous assault upon his very throne. But none can suppose, that the conduct of God, in rendering to his creatures according to their works, partakes in the least of this malignant spirit. To execute judgment on the guilty is his right, as the sovereign Ruler and Judge of the world. He is a God of adorable mercy; but he is just, as well as merciful. If men rebel against him, and persist in their rebellion, he regards them as his enemies, and fights against them with his righteous judgments. If they repent of their sins, humble themselves before him, and return to their duty, he graciously receives them, pardons their iniquity, averts the threatened judgments, and fills their cup with good. This sentiment is most plainly expressed in the text, and is current through the scriptures.

All God's promises of good, as the reward of obedience, are grounded on the condition, that the obedience be faithfully rendered; and there is always a reserve for the exercise of justice, in case of rebellion. And on the other hand, all his threatenings of evil, as the recompence of disobedience, are made on the condition of perseverance in rebellion; and there is always a reserve for the exercise of mercy, in case of repentance and reformation. This apparent conditionality does not, however, imply any uncertainty in the mind of God, in regard to future events; for, *declaring the end from the beginning, he is in one mind, and none can turn him.* Neither does it imply any uncertainty in those promises of the covenant of grace, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and are confirmed to all who are united to him through faith and love, by the oath of the unchangeable God. These remarks may afford some aid in explaining what is to be understood by God's repenting of promised good and threatened evil. It cannot mean, that he is subject to any such regret and sorrow as we feel, when we discover the folly or sinfulness of our conduct; nor that he acts contrary to what he has ordained in his secret and immutable counsel. Either supposition is totally inconsistent with the perfections of his nature, and with abundant declarations of his word. With God there is *no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. When repentance is ascribed to him, it must, therefore, signify only a change in the outward administrations of his providence, conforming them to the characters and actions of men. This is called repentance, because

It is such in the view of man, who sees only the outward appearance.

That God deals with nations according to their conduct toward him, is evident, not only from the text, but from many declarations of his word, and from the *history of his providence*.

It is evident from many declarations of his word.

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, with the upright thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. This is equivalent to the words of Christ in the seventh chapter of Matthew : *With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* When king Aſa was returning in triumph to Jeruſalem, after his ſignal victory over the vaſt Ethiopian army, Azariah the prophet was ſent forth to meet him, and directed by God not to ſalute him with fulſome adulation, but with this ſolemn meſſage : *Hear me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin ; the Lord is with you while ye be with him ; and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.* Admirable addreſs to a mighty conqueror when entering his capital in triumph ! Would God that the palaces and triumphal arches of all the potentates of the earth might reſound with this warning voice. Had kings and emperors been duly impreſſed with this ſalutary admonition, many thrones, which are levelled with the duſt, would have ſtood to this day.

Without multiplying quotations to prove a point which is taught throughout the ſacred pages, I proceed to obſerve, that *the history of God's provi-*

dence verifies the proposition, that he deals with nations according to their conduct toward him.

This truth is fully exemplified in the history of the Hebrew nation. God sent them blessings or judgments according as they were obedient or disobedient to his word. When they rebelled against him, he always visited them with the sword, or some other terrible calamity, which was not removed till they humbled themselves under his mighty hand, and turned from their evil ways.

The same rule of equity he observed toward other nations of old. Why did he cause the sword to devour the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, and exterminate from the earth those numerous warlike kingdoms, which once flourished in that quarter of the globe? Why are not the thrones of the Pharaohs and the Cæsars standing at this day? Why has the magnificence of Egypt, Tyre, Babylon and Rome been so long buried in utter ruin? Because they hearkened not to the warnings of the Lord's prophets, but obstinately persisted in their own wicked devices. It uniformly appears, that divine judgments were sent upon them as the just recompence of their iniquities.

The same procedure is yet visible in the providence of God. Nations now are prospered or punished, according as they pay allegiance to God, or rebel against him. He may, indeed, grant a merciful respite, and endure with much long suffering their impious provocations, while he gently corrects them and multiplies his warnings: but if they turn not from their evil, he will whet his glittering sword, and, taking hold on judgment, will render vengeance to his enemies. He is, at this day, tak-

ing vengeance on the nations of Europe. Long did he restrain his indignation ; but at length he has come out of his place, decked with terrible majesty, *trampling them in his fury, and vexing them in his sore displeasure.* He has raised up a mighty conqueror to execute his wrath upon those wicked nations. Fear and dismay go before him ; misery and desolation follow after him. He will go on and prosper, *till the indignation be accomplished,* when, for his enormous pride and wickedness, *he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.* The dire convulsions, which are shaking the kingdoms, and demolishing those thrones which have long been supported by iniquity and blood, teach us what a people have reason to expect from the hand of the Lord, when they cast off his fear and trample his laws under their feet. Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Prussia,—where are they ? Some of them, indeed, have a name to live ; but they are dead ; and in their dying pangs and struggles, they have left to us and the world a most affecting admonition, not to contend with the Almighty.

Nations, as such, receive the recompence of their sins in temporal judgments ; because, in the eternal world, there will be no national existence—no nations to punish. There, every one must give an account of *himself* to God, and receive an eternal retribution from his hand. In this respect, the situation of nations and individuals is widely different. When a nation is destroyed for its corruption and crimes, it ceases to exist ; but all the individual sinners of that nation, whose iniquities drew down destruction upon the public body, unless brought to

repentance before their death, experience, as individuals, the just vengeance of the Almighty upon their souls for ever.

Against this view of the divine providence, it may be objected, that the most wicked nations are often the most powerful, and appear the most prosperous and happy. Such an impression arises from a superficial view of the state of such nations. They, indeed, are powerful, and make a splendid and dazzling appearance. But the appearance is delusive. Search for happiness in such a kingdom or empire, and you search in vain. It is surely a stranger to the palace of the monarch, and to the field of battle. Among the people it is not to be found. They groan under the iron hand of a merciless despot. Freedom, peace and safety have fled from their borders. Every thing valuable in human society is sacrificed upon the bloody altar of lawless ambition. The treasures of the nation are exhausted, its families are distressed and torn to pieces, its sons are dragged from their homes, and chained to the car of the tyrant, to spread misery, blood and ruin wherever his power can reach. Besides, a nation of this character is permitted to reach a proud eminence in power and splendor, that it may experience a more tremendous downfall. Prosperity in wickedness is a sure indication that God has forsaken a people, and that they are filling up the measure of their iniquities, and ripening for destruction. When their measure is full, God has the instruments of his justice prepared to execute his threatenings upon them. Before the arrival of this dreadful hour, they must repent and reform, or fall into inevitable perdition.

IN IMPROVING the subject of this discourse, according to the design of our assembling to day, our attention will be confined to the two following inferences : that we have great *occasion*, and great *encouragement*, for humiliation, fasting and prayer.

1.—If we review and apply the subject, we find great occasion to engage in the duties for which we consecrate the day.

As a nation, have we not done evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoked him to anger by refusing to obey his voice? He has long been speaking to us, not only in his word, and in his dealings with other nations ; but in his providence toward us as a people. By the unexampled prosperity and long continued peace, which we have heretofore enjoyed, he showed that he delighted in us to do us good. But how ungratefully have we abused his blessings! Hardened by prosperity, we have perverted the richest favors of his providence as occasions of sin.

It has been shown, that a free people refuse to obey the voice of God, when, in electing men to fill the offices of government, they pay no regard to the cause of religion ; when they uphold rulers in the abuse of their power ; and when the principles and manners of the people are greatly corrupted. Now, in exercising the right of election, have we duly regarded the honor of God, and the cause of truth and righteousness? Have we not forgotten or contemned some of the plainest precepts of God's word? Instead of taking special heed to ourselves, that we choose good men, who fear God and hate covetousness, and who would be a terror to evil doers and a praise and encouragement to them that do well, have not the body of this people been ac-

tuated in their elections by prejudice and passion? I only ask, and leave it with conscience to make the application and give the answer.

In regard to upholding rulers in the abuse of their power, can we stand in the presence of God, and plead not guilty? Have not our state and federal governments, in this way, refused to obey the voice of the Lord? Have not unjust and oppressive laws been enacted, and sometimes executed in a cruel and arbitrary manner? Have not the public treasures been squandered on objects that are useless, or worse than useless, to the community? Have none of our chiefs in power been patrons of evil doers, and persecutors of them who do well? Does it uniformly appear, that what was in their gift has been conferred to promote the public good, rather than to establish the interest of a party? Can it be shown, that the disastrous war into which we are plunged is absolutely necessary? Is it a war of simple self defence? Has every other reasonable measure been tried in vain, for the preservation of liberty and peace? In relation to the two great belligerent powers of Europe, has our Executive pursued a course of strict neutrality? I only ask, and leave the questions to be resolved by facts. I have always discarded the idea of making the pulpit a place for mere political discussion.

In regard to the corruption of principles and manners prevailing among the people, the prospect before us is truly alarming. The flood of licentiousness, which has deluged Europe, and brought down the judgments of Heaven upon those wicked nations, has spread into our land, and makes a threatening progress. Impiety and crime of every

name and description march forth in defiance of God and man. Alas ! how have we degenerated from the purity of our fathers ! Will not a righteous God *visit for these things, and will not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?* Yea, judgment has already begun. The sword is commissioned to devour. The horrid sound of war resounds in these long peaceful shores. God is angry, and is visiting us with the most terrible of his judgments. Yes, of all the judgments of Heaven, war is the most terrible. The confusion and misery it occasions, in every grade and condition of society, no language can express. No calamity is attended and followed by such ruinous and awful effects. It imposes excessive burdens upon innocent people ; and the tendency it has to demoralize society exceeds our conception. It turns men into ferocious beasts, that seek only to destroy each other, and are most in their element amid rapine and carnage. It extinguishes the last spark of kindness and mercy from the human breast, and prepares men for every act of cruelty and oppression. It cuts off thousands in a day ; and often hurries ten thousand souls, in all their unpardoned guilt, to the bar of God and the region of endless despair. It turns that into an occasion of joy and triumph, which ought rather to cover us with shame, and prostrate us in the dust of repentance and humiliation. O the scourge of war ! It is Jehovah's strange work. All the nations which have been swept from the earth, those only excepted that perished in the waters of the deluge and the flames of Sodom, were destroyed by the sword. War is an enemy of every good thing. Other judgments may convince and reform a peo-

ple. Famine, pestilence, earthquakes and fires, may awaken and reclaim. But war invariably hardens and depraves. Religion flies before it. Desolation, misery, and every evil, follow in its train. The frogs of Egypt, and the destruction of all their first born, were light calamities compared with all the horrid consequences of a long and bloody war. May God, in mercy, avert this judgment. Surely it is a fore calamity, and what will be the issue of this conflict, who can divine? But what must be the infatuation of a people, that should reach out their hands and pull this vengeance down upon their own heads! that should unstop the vials of divine wrath, and draw out upon themselves their hottest plagues! But I forbear.

Have we not reason to fast and pray, and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God? It is verily *a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.*

2.—If God deals with nations according to their conduct toward him, and repents of the evil he has threatened or begun to inflict, when they repent and turn from their evil, then we have great encouragement devoutly to wait upon the Lord in the duties of this day. He is a God who is rich in *mercy*. He delights not in the misery and destruction of sinful men, but that they turn and live. Repentance and reformation are our only hope. If our sins have brought this and all our calamities upon us, those sins must be lamented and forsaken, or judgment will increase. And how wonderful is the mercy of God in promising to receive, pardon and bless a returning people or individual, after all their rebellions against him! He will assuredly be

found of them that seek him. Let us not, then, despair, but hope in the mercy and power of the Lord. Who knows but that, in answer to the humble prayers ascending to day, in this Commonwealth and two of our sister States, God will take away the terrible judgment, which we fear and deprecate? Let us wait upon the Lord, and place all our hope and expectation in him. *Wait I say upon the Lord.*

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